

Traffic Project

BACKGROUND

The Judicial Council originally established an eight-member Traffic Advisory Committee in 1991 to review, report on, and make recommendations to the council on several issues, including (1) the advisability of maintaining traffic matters within the court system, (2) the efficacy of changing the procedures for adjudication of traffic infractions from criminal to civil law, and (3) the utility of standardized procedures for traffic school eligibility criteria.

In January 1995, the Judicial Council adopted rule 1034 of the California Rules of Court, which established a standing Traffic Advisory Committee consisting of bench officers and court administrators and attorneys. The following year the council added three nonvoting representatives from other government agencies. Effective January 1, 1998, the council amended rule 1034 to specify the government agencies from which committee members may be nominated (Department of Motor Vehicles, Office of Traffic Safety, and California Highway Patrol) and to provide voting rights to these members.

The Traffic Advisory Committee makes recommendations for improving the administration of justice in the area of traffic procedure and case management and in other areas as set forth in the bail schedules for, fish and game, boating, forestry, public utilities, parks and recreation, and business licensing.

PROJECT GOALS

- Ensure fairness and justice in traffic court;
- Promote traffic safety awareness and adherence to traffic laws;
- Increase public understanding, access, and ease in the handling of traffic citations within the traffic system;
- Minimize the number of court contacts required to process and adjudicate traffic infraction citations;
- Increase the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of processing traffic citations; and
- Increase statewide standardization and uniformity in the administration and adjudication of traffic matters.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The Traffic Advisory committee and its staff

- Prepare and disseminate annual Uniform Bail and Penalty Schedules.
- Analyze legislative proposals relating to traffic.
- Respond to inquiries about traffic issues from members of the public, court management staff, the Legislature, law enforcement officials, and staff of other agencies.
- Develop and revise forms, circulate them for comment, and assess responses to proposed traffic-related rules and forms.

- Design, circulate for comment, and present to the Judicial Council revisions to the Notice to Appear for infractions and misdemeanors.
- Participate in panel presentations at the California Office of Traffic Safety's Police Traffic Safety Seminar, held in Monterey every December.
- Organize and present a statewide, two-day traffic adjudication workshop. Approximately 110 judicial officers, law enforcement officials, and others interested in traffic adjudication attended this workshop, which occurred May 6–7, 1999.
- Circulate a mandatory insurance survey, resulting in a report to the Legislature (1999).
- Post all traffic forms to the California Courts Web site. Develop a Web page for the Traffic Committee where information regarding the committee and traffic issues can be posted.

The 27-member Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest and busiest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts serves as the staff agency to the council.